

## On House Managing

The following duties are the responsibility of the House Manager. All Harbarch and Studio Theatre productions must have a house manager (including rentals).

### Your Protocols:

- Attend all performances in appropriate dress (white top, black bottoms or as determined by the production).
- If you are not doing the pre-curtain speech, wear a nametag that identifies you as the House Manager. These are available from the house management bookshelf in the main theatre office.
- Give your cell number to all ushers and the stage manager.
- Take responsibility for finding ushers for **all** performances.
- Keep track of the house count for every performance and report final house counts to the Theatre Department Student Secretary.
- Check weather reports before arriving to the theatre (winter storms, tornado season)
- House Manager Reports should be sent to the faculty, TAB Production Manager and Technical Director, the Director, and Stage Manager.
- Attend a dress rehearsal so that you are able to answer audience questions and assess anything regarding the play that might affect house management.
- Obtain cell numbers from the director, the stage manager, and the department chair.

### Before the Performance:

Arrive at the theatre at least 45 minutes before the curtain.

For Harbach productions:

Assure that the box office has its bank and tickets. Review the box office record keeping procedures with the box office personnel. The cash box is kept in the chair's office. In the event that the chair is not present, the faculty director will be able to get the box. Should the faculty director also not be present, text the chair to call security to open the office. Keep the door on unlock so that you may return the box to the desk (lock the door)?

Gather ushers and train them in:

- Welcoming the audience
- Asking persons not to eat or drink in the theatre
- Handing out programs and taking tickets
- Controlling seating (It is advisable to fill the house center section before allowing the house to spill randomly to the sides.)
- Contacting the house manager in the event of a handicapped patron
- Deferring to the house manager in the instance of a difficult patron.
- Seating latecomers (It is advisable to tape off seats in the extreme house left and right back row and to seat latecomers from the house left and right doors instead of the center doors. Advise people that they may move at the intermission.)
- Closing the house

- Rising to open the house at intermission and the final curtain
- Picking up trash and programs from the house
- Recycling programs.
- Keeping fire aisles clear of seated patrons and backpacks
- Asking patrons politely to stop taking pictures or video (copyright violation)
- Emergency evacuation

### **Seating the House:**

- Control flow of audience members through multiple doors.
- Take note of when the house is full, ask audience to move over to close gaps in the rows if the house is filling.
- Inform late-comers that the house is full and of subsequent performances.
- Individuals who are under the influence of alcohol/drugs should be asked to leave—call security if they refuse: 7979. Do not engage in a confrontation.
- Seat ushers in the seats by the doors, so they can get up fast, as well as see the audience during performance.

### **Closing the House:**

- Make the decision to close the house in concert with the stage manager. The SM should inform you when actors are in place. You inform the SM as to whether or not there is a hold.
- Bare Stage productions that do not have an SM will then require that the director confers with you as to the start.
- Allow the SM to start the show based on how many people are still in line for tickets—one or two persons rushing to pick up tickets is not enough reason to hold. Closing the house for start is ultimately the house manager's call, but use your judgment, as a late start can seriously undermine the audience's reception of the play—especially if they think it is long.
- If there is not a recorded greeting, make sure the following speech is communicated to the audience:

*Ladies and gentlemen, I am your house manager, YOUR NAME, and I would like to welcome you to the Harbach (Studio) Theatre production of ...*

*Please note that the use of any recording device, either audio or video, and the taking of photographs, either with or without flash, is strictly prohibited, as it is distracting to the performers and is a violation of the intellectual copyrights of the designers, directors, and choreographers. Also, please turn off all electronic devices such as cell phones, beepers, and watches. Most especially, please do not text during the performance, as it is a disturbance to those around you and distracting to the performers. Thank you for your attention, and we hope that you enjoy the performance.*

### **During Performance**

- Ushers seated near the doors should keep an eye on the audience. They are the point people in the event of a medical emergency or the need to ask someone to stop texting or taking pictures.
- One staff member needs to remain in the lobby to control late-comers, noise, and gym traffic. This is especially important on nights when there also is a Kresge event.

- Box office take should be counted by two people together, box office report written, cashbox stowed in the theatre chair's office.

### **Intermission:**

- At intermission (if applicable) and end of show, get up in time to have the doors opened for the audience's exit. If you are not in the house, you need to time the act and your ushers need to be informed of the final moment so that they may rise to help deal with the doors.
- Post an Usher down by the stage to discourage people from going up onto the stage.
- Be sure to confer with the Stage Manager to close the house. The SM will give you a two minutes call so that you can close, but you need to let the SM know at that time if you think you may have to hold. Decide between you how long to hold. Try not to hold.
- Signal the audience back into the house for the second act. This needs to be timed. If you have a large house, you need to start moving them back into the theatre several minutes before you need the house seated to begin. If it is a large house, you should check the women's bathrooms for congestion before fully closing the house. This does not mean that you hold for only one person, but if there is line, you may need to hold. If it is a smaller house and they seem already to have gone back into the theatre, let the SM know that they can start at will.
- Do not let the audience return to the house with drinks and chips. Ushers should staff the doors at intermission.
- There should be a minimum of 2 ushers in the house during the second act. They should be ready to open the doors for the end of the performance.

### **Emergencies:**

- Know where first aid kits are located in the case of a minor emergency (booth and main office).
- Locate and familiarize yourself (and ushers) with the use of the fire extinguishers.
- Do not take on contentious or combative audience members. Call Campus Security.
- In the event of a serious medical emergency (i.e. heart attack, loss of consciousness), you should alert the SM to stop the show and evacuate the house while the stricken person is kept comfortable and you wait for emergency assistance.
- Have ushers circulate among the waiting audience to reassure them and then to signal the return to the performance.
- Note all incidents in the House Managers Report.

### **Emergency Evacuation:**

- Have a cell phone on your person, turned on to vibrate in case of an emergency requiring a call to 911.
- In a fire or critical medical emergency, call 911 first and Campus Security at 7979.
- Know which exits are available in the case of an emergency evacuation, inform the ushers of which exits they will staff in the case of an emergency, and take the lead in evacuating everyone safely and quickly if necessary
  - Two exits from the building on the west wall facing the residence halls (north and south stairwells)

- One on the southwest corner facing the gym
- One exit down the north stairs at the art studios to the loading dock)
- If the lobby is blocked, audience should be directed out of the building across the stage and out the scene shop and wings.
- In the event of a fire, direct exiting audience to all egresses from the building itself so as not to cause a stampede at any one location.
  - House left should head for the lobby gym exit.
  - House left center should head for the West exit South (stairwell nearer the music wing).
  - House right center should head for the West exit North (the door everyone usually uses to enter or leave CFA or go up to 205).
  - House left should head for the Art Studio stairwell and loading dock exit.
- In the event of a tornado, direct audiences to both stairwells leading to the greenroom/make-up area and studio theatre lobby for safety. However, lobby and stairwells will be dangerous if there is an imminent touchdown. If that is the case, lead the house audience across the stage left and right and through the greenroom into studio theatre lobby. *Remember that spring is tornado season—check weather reports before arriving for the performance.*

**Following the Performance:**

- Assure that the house is clean, the box office closed, the cash box stowed, the lobby picked up, and the house lights are off before leaving the premises.
- File HOUSE MANAGER REPORT. There is a template form for this report. This report goes to the SM, director/producer, faculty, designers, theatre student secretary, TAB Production Manager and Technical Director. The following information is to be filled in:
  - Start time of first curtain
  - Weather
  - Reasons for holds
  - Box Office information re no-shows, total number of comps
  - House Count
    - Any special demographic information such as groups, special needs, dominant age group
  - Time and duration of intermission
  - Start time of second act curtain
  - Time Final Curtain came down
  - House response impression (often garnered by circulating discretely during intermission and listening as you say goodnight to the house and thank them for coming)
  - Numbers of Ushers
  - Any incidents